

Postmodern Imperialism and the European Union

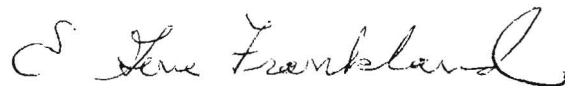
An Honors Thesis (POLS 404)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "E. Gene Frankland". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "E" and a long, sweeping underline.

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Abstract

Throughout history, dominant nations have exerted control over foreign parts of the world. In the past, powerful nations would colonize other parts of the world in order to expand their own reach. This practice was referred to as imperialism. Imperialism often involved direct violence, coercion, and subjugation of native populations. Colonial imperialism is a thing of the past. Despite this, dominant powers still exert their influence on other parts of the world. This is referred to as postmodern imperialism. The most common methods of postmodern imperialism involve the spread of capitalism and culture to other nations. Dominant powers such as the United States and European Union are involved with these practices. This paper will focus on the European Union and how its policies exert influence upon other nations in a manner consistent with postmodern imperialism.

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Introduction

Throughout history, there have been many states that can be classified as empires. These include the Roman Empire, Mongolian Empire, Holy Roman Empire, and British Empire. Each of these empires covered large parts of the globe in their glory days. These empires also required a method that would allow them to control the territories that they had conquered. This method is called imperialism. A simple way to define imperialism is "the domination and exploitation of weaker states by stronger ones."¹ While this definition is simple, it is also very broad. There are quite a few methods for stronger states to dominate and exploit weaker ones. The most common of these methods was to conquer weaker states and absorb them as colonies into an empire.

Perhaps the most famous example of such an empire was the Roman Empire, which existed from 44 BC to 476 AD. The Roman Empire conquered Iberia, Greece, the Balkans, and large parts of what is now the Middle East.² This constituted most of "the known world." Conquered territories were placed under the control of military governors who were responsible for administering Roman rule. One such governor was Julius Caesar, who served as governor of Gaul from 58 to 49 BC.³

Today, imperialism takes several different forms. The age of colonialist imperial powers has ended and the days of global empires such as that of Rome and the 18th-20th Century British Empire have passed. However, new forms of imperialism have risen to take the place of the traditional ones. The first part of this paper will concern itself with analyzing these new methods of imperialism. After that, conceptions of the European Union will be looked at in an effort to understand what the organization is.

Finally, the policies of the EU will be examined in an effort to see if it exhibits any characteristics of contemporary imperialism.

Imperialism Today

Hegemonic stability theory

There are several explanations of imperialism today. One explanation of imperialism is provided by hegemonic stability theory. The theory argues that the international power distribution is the primary factor that determines the character of the global economic system. It states that a hegemonic distribution of power is most likely to create an open and stable international economic system. A hegemonic distribution of power is one in which there is a single dominant actor. Examples of "hegemons" include Britain in the 19th century and the United States in the period following World War II.⁴

There are two versions of hegemonic stability theory. Liberal economist Charles Kindleberger's version is based on game theory and draws from the "logic of collective goods." In his version, international economic stability is a collective good. Collective goods are those that all actors benefit from regardless of their contribution. Here, small and medium-sized states are less likely to contribute as their assistance will not have very much impact. The problem with this is that if all states were this size, no actor contributes and international economic stability will not exist. Kindleberger concludes that only a hegemon has the power and motivation to provide international economic stability.⁵

The other version of hegemonic stability theory comes from Robert Gilpin and Stephen Krasner. Their version explains the instability of systems without a hegemon by putting it in terms of state power and national security. A system with a hegemonic

distribution of power allows the dominant state to promote global liberalization of trade without jeopardizing its security objectives. A liberalized system will increase the income, economic growth, and political power of the hegemonic actor without affecting social stability.⁶

In both versions of hegemonic stability theory, the hegemon has certain characteristics that allow it to provide international economic stability. The hegemon must be able to organize actions that liberalize trade. It must also keep its market open during periods of recession. In addition, the hegemon must be responsible for the maintenance of an international monetary system. This involves supplying an international currency, being able to provide liquidity, and managing exchange rates. Finally, the hegemon must provide investment capital and encourage development in periphery parts of the system.⁷

In order to do these things, the hegemon must have the capability to enforce the rules of the system in addition to the will and commitment to the system. A hegemon's capability rests upon it possessing a growing economy with dominance in a leading technological or economic sector. The hegemon must also have political power that it can back up with dominant military power.⁸ The United States after World War II is a good example of an actor with these traits. This is due to the fact that other global competitors had suffered massive amounts of damage during the war.

Several scholars have pointed out flaws in hegemonic stability theory. In the long term, a hegemon will lose power. This loss of power causes strains in the international economic system.⁹ If this is true, then the actions of the hegemon are a

sort of suicidal behavior due to the fact that no hegemon can keep power forever. While no hegemon or empire can last forever, some have managed to last hundreds of years.

Proponents of hegemonic stability theory assume this problem away by describing the hegemon as benevolent. However, it is generally accepted in the realist theory of international relations that states act in ways that further their self-interests. This leads to a choice between actions that are benevolent yet self-destructive and actions that are predatory in nature.¹⁰ It is obviously not in the interest of a state to engage in self-destructive behavior. Therefore, this means that the assumption of a benevolent hegemon is not necessarily a true one.

The theory also has empirical problems. It is generally accepted that the United States became a declining hegemon sometime in the 1970's. This has not brought about the erosion in international economic stability that the theory suggests would happen. In fact, openness has increased in some parts of the economy, and there has not been a widespread increase in tariffs. From the mid-1970's to the late 1980's, trade continued to grow faster than aggregate economic activity. Also, the world has seen an increase in financial activity.¹¹

Other international economic institutions based on collective action have not collapsed since America became a declining hegemon. The European Community/European Union (EU) and GATT/World Trade Organization (WTO) are still alive and well. It is important to note that there have been many failures as well, such as trading communities among lesser developed countries. However, the success of the EU and WTO show that collective action is possible without a hegemon.¹²

This does not mean that hegemonic stability theory is empirically false. Other parts of economic performance can be traced to the decline of the United States as a hegemon. The international monetary system went through a drastic change when America pulled out of the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates. Arab oil producing nations were able to put a cutback in production into force due to the fact that America had become a net importer of oil and therefore could not resist such a measure.¹³ These events seem to back what hegemonic stability theory says about a declining hegemon and economic instability.

The theory also assumes an impossibility of collective action without the aid of a hegemon. This can be seen in Kindleberger's assessment of the chances of Japan and Germany working with the United States to provide leadership to the world economy. Kindleberger does not rate this scenario as being very likely.¹⁴ If collective actions were possible without a hegemon, then it would follow that hegemonic stability theory is not valid.

Duncan Snidal argues that this is due to a misunderstanding of realist theory. As stated earlier, realism makes the case that states act in ways that further their own self-interest. This does not mean that states are barred from collaborating. Instead, actors will only collaborate when it serves their own interests.¹⁵ It can also be said that this problem comes from a misunderstanding of a realist view of the international environment. The theory of realism notes the lack of an authority that can enforce cooperative promises.¹⁶ This is contrary to the assumption that an authority, in this case the hegemon, must enforce the laws of the system.

It can be seen that hegemonic stability theory is not flawless. Its empirical record can be challenged, and it can be argued that some of its assumptions come from misunderstandings of realist theory. However, states such as the U.S. have led measures to liberalize trade and encourage development. With powerful states urging liberalization, hegemonic stability theory is still relevant.

Capitalist imperialism

Another theory that has been advanced is that of “capitalist imperialism.” This conception was popularized by Vladimir Lenin and is maintained by the Marxist scholars of today. David Harvey states that capitalist imperialism is a contradictory fusion of “the politics of state and empire” and “the molecular processes of capital accumulation in space and time.” This is another way of talking about the strategies used to further the self-interest of a state and how economic power moves through territories.¹⁷ Here, the political and economic logics of power differ from each other. Other literature on imperialism assumes synergy between them. In the case of capitalist governments, this synergy suggests that “political-economic processes are guided by the strategies of state and empire and that states and empires always operate out of capitalistic motivations.”¹⁸ This is not always the case. Decisions such as the American invasion of Iraq are hard to justify in terms of acquiring capital for the state given the large amount of money spent.¹⁹

Under this theory of imperialism, the capitalist logic is dominant.²⁰ The capitalist logic of imperialism usually dictates that states exploit the differences in capital accumulation geographically. The wealth and well-being of a powerful state is expanded at the expense of the less fortunate. One of the main political tasks of the

imperial state is to preserve this advantage. A failure to do this results in the state losing wealth and power.²¹

In capitalist imperialism, the state plays a vital role in capital accumulation. The state must use its political power to preserve the advantages to the capitalist interests within it. History contains examples of states that force institutional conditions and arrangements on their peers. The British demanded free trade of other nations and laissez-faire economics during the 19th century, at the height of their power. The U.S. has also made free trade agreements with other nations. A notable example is the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico.²² The theory of capitalist imperialism suggests that these agreements are designed to benefit the imperialist state more than their trading partners. The imperialist power requires ways in which to accumulate capital. The opening of new foreign markets creates more demand for investment and consumer goods. In addition, capital accumulation is possible if the cost of inputs is lowered. Therefore, the imperialist state must find a way to continue to increase its market and lower input cost.²³

The primary method to fulfill this requirement is through institutional arrangements such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO). These institutions work under the cover of the term globalization. In the eyes of the Marxists who study theories of capitalist imperialism, globalization refers to the spread of free trade policies throughout the world. Today, the United States is accused of using these institutions to further its agenda of capitalist imperialism. The fact that the offices of the IMF and World Bank are both located in Washington DC does not help this case. While a European has traditionally been at the

head of the IMF, its voting rules mean that policy changes must be run through the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury. The World Bank must also do the same thing with any policy changes.²⁴

The IMF and World Bank accomplish these goals through “structural adjustment.” Under these programs, the World Bank lends to a debtor nation in order to keep it from defaulting. In order to receive these loans, the debtor nation must agree to a socioeconomic overhaul imposed by the IMF.²⁵ These programs involve that the debtor nation liberalize trade – meaning that it gives other nations access to its economy. It also must reduce the amount spent, for example, on social programs and agricultural subsidies in order to repay its debts.²⁶

The IMF also forces the debtor nation to drop all of its restrictions on the movement of capital and allow foreign entities to buy state-owned enterprises. The convertibility of currency also must be maintained. The net effect of these demands is negative to the debtor nation. The debtor nation does not achieve any economic growth from instituting these reforms. These nations often face rampant currency speculation that leads to an economic collapse. Examples of this include Mexico in 1994-95, nations of Southeast Asia in 1997, Argentina in 2000, and Venezuela in 2002.²⁷

The WTO and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that came before it is another method used in capitalist imperialism to gain capital. An example of this can be seen in the Uruguay Round of international trade negotiations that happened from 1986 to 1994. The EU and the U.S. were able to exclude Third World nations from the negotiations and put rules governing trade of agriculture in place.²⁸

Third World nations were barred from subsidizing agricultural production, but EU and U.S. subsidies were exempted from these rules.²⁹

Without protection for their goods, developing nations faced a huge wave of agricultural imports that caused massive profits for American and European companies. This stopped developing nations from growing competitive industries. After doing this, the rich members of the WTO decided to keep their technology out of the hands of the Third World. The Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS) gives multinational corporations a minimum patent protection of twenty years.³⁰ Without competition, these corporations are able to construct a monopoly.

The rebuttal to leftist theories of capitalist imperialism can be found in the mission statements of the indicted organizations. The director-general of the WTO has stated that the task of the WTO is to provide a forum for the reduction of obstacles to trade between nations in order to promote economic growth. In addition, the WTO provides a legal framework that monitors agreements and resolves disputes between nations. The functions of the WTO are said to be geared towards sustainable development among its members.³¹

Empirical data does lend some credence to the idea that the WTO has been beneficial to international trade. Trade has been increased among nations that are WTO members and nations that have not completed the accession process but have taken on the obligations of the WTO.³² Literature backing the WTO suggests that this increase is due to an institutional solution to a prisoners dilemma inherent to the system of international trade. These institutions also make sure that nations cannot go back on trade agreements.³³

Recent findings contradict earlier studies which suggested that WTO membership did not increase trade. These older studies only looked at formal members of the WTO and not nations that were nonmember participants.³⁴ A look at the data shows that states participating in the GATT/WTO experience more trade than those that do not. Trade between formal members increased by 41 percent while trade between formal members and nonparticipants increased by 22 percent. Trade between nonmember participants increased by 56 percent compared to an increase of just 19 percent between nonmember participants and nonparticipants.³⁵ This takes into account a general increase in trade since the beginning of the GATT/WTO, but shows that the institution has boosted the increase in trade.

The purpose of the IMF is to “foster global growth and create economic stability.” It also provides “policy advice” to members that are experiencing economic difficulties (IMF 2011).³⁶ This advice comes in the form of the previously mentioned programs of structural adjustment. It is much harder to find empirical support for the policies of the IMF. The institution has been blamed for creating worse conditions in developing countries. In addition, its policies of structural adjustment have been called ineffective in promoting economic growth. The Meltzer Report of March 2000, which was required by the U.S. Congress, stated that the IMF had “institutionalized economic stagnation.”³⁷

Many economies in Sub-Saharan Africa have put IMF structural adjustment programs into place. A study published in 1993 showed that countries that were considered to be strong implementers of these programs have not performed differently from those that did not implement IMF programs.³⁸ Structural adjustment programs have ignored the activities of much of the Sub-Saharan population. These programs

have not addressed transformation of domestic structures, which arguably dooms any hopes of effectiveness.³⁹

The IMF has also been accused of creating starvation and destitution within India. The Indian government signed off an IMF loan agreement and a World Bank structural adjustment loan in December 1991. This caused many problems for India. The economy was pushed into stagflation, as seen by the 50 percent increase in the price of rice in the months following the agreement. Additionally, trade liberalization and the entry of foreign capital caused many domestic producers to enter bankruptcy.⁴⁰

The program undertaken in India also supported the repeal of minimum wage legislation. This resulted in the IMF being labeled as an “instrument of economic genocide.” Many people during this period lived on an income of 50 cents a day or less. The aforementioned rise in the price of rice pushed many of these people into starvation. This drop in consumption of food was matched by increases in rice exports.⁴¹ This appears to be another example of the exploitation inherent in capitalist imperialism.

These factors would seem to give significant backing to the theory of capitalist imperialism. If the arguments made by many on the left are true, then these institutions and measures are engineered toward exploiting smaller states for the benefit of the larger states. This is a big reason why theories capitalist imperialism has managed to stay relevant among Marxist scholars. However, other theories have also generated discussion among those on the left.

Empire

One such theory is that of a global “Empire”. It is important to note that the conception of Empire refers to the theory of postmodern imperialism and not the common term empire. Empire is a radical departure from the theories of imperialism that came before it. At the core of Empire is a universal notion of right. There are also no boundaries to Empire. It encompasses the entire globe. The concept is also an order that “effectively suspends history” and fixes the state of the world for eternity. Additionally, Empire does not simply manage the globe, but it creates the world that it exists in as well. It rules social life in its entirety with a dedication to peace. This is despite the wars that occur to preserve it.⁴²

The unique thing about Empire is that it is “a global concert under the direction of a single conductor.”⁴³ This completely replaces the idea of imperialism. Competition among powers such as America and the EU has been replaced by a single power that binds them all and governs them under a “common notion of right.”⁴⁴ This global concert “supports the globalization of productive networks” and attempts to put all power relations into its order. This is backed up by a police function that strikes at those who attempt to threaten it.⁴⁵

Communications networks are integral to the order of Empire. These networks express and organize globalization. This allows communications industries to assume a key position in the construction of Empire. These industries reorganize production and allow a new structure of power to be put into place. This is because power organizes, and in order to organize it must express itself through communication.⁴⁶

As previously stated, Empire is dedicated to peace. Empire wishes to spread peace throughout the world.⁴⁷ When threats arise to the system, they must be dealt

with. In Empire, the act of war is synonymous with a police action.⁴⁸ These police actions are mainly carried out by the United States as it is the only nation that can adequately perform them. The Gulf War is the first example of such an action in the era after the Cold War.⁴⁹

The United States has been called upon to intervene in regional conflicts since the fall of the Soviet Union. Under Empire, the United States is obligated to do so to secure peace and order. Here, one of the central facts of Empire can be observed. Empire exists in a world that constantly calls it into existence. The American peace police are called into action when the supranational organization of Empire demands a police action.⁵⁰

Empire works in three phases. The first of these phases is its inclusiveness. Everyone is welcome within Empire. This universal inclusion is done through setting aside differences that could lead to social conflict. When this has taken place, Empire can bring a consensus to the space that it governs. This consensus takes the form of the universal notion of right that is the core of Empire. Here, Empire invites all to come within its boundaries.⁵¹ This is in contrast to the classic imperial method of forceful takeover of territory.

The second phase is the "affirmation of differences" within Empire. Differences are celebrated from a cultural perspective. These differences do not infringe on the consensus that Empire creates. They are not thought of as political differences and it is assumed that they will function as a source of peaceful regional identification. An example of this is the restoration of ethnic identities in former socialist countries such as

those in the Balkans. Empire does not make new differences. It merely works with what it has acquired.⁵²

The last phase of control involves management. These differences must be managed into a “general economy of command”. Empire works with a system of identities that are constantly changing and mixing. This is different from colonial imperialism, which functioned on a system of fixed identities.⁵³ An example of the management strategy used by Empire can be found in the division of workers on Central American banana plantations. Ethnic divisions among the labor force are used as a means of control. This shows the task Empire must perform. It must arrange these differences in an efficient manner so that it can command them.⁵⁴

Empire has three means of reinforcing its control. The first of these means is through nuclear weapons. The massive amount of nuclear weapons in existence threatens the destruction of all life. The role of nuclear weapons in Empire places restrictions on the sovereignty of nations. Countries can no longer make decisions on war and peace due to the threat of the bomb. As mentioned above, war has become a police action taken by countries such as the United States.⁵⁵

The second way in which Empire reinforces its control is through money. The process of globalization has created the world market, effectively destroying national or regional structures of financial regulation. The new market is concentrated in cities all around the world, forming the financial backbone of Empire. This financial structure is based on what Empire requires politically. Monetary mechanisms are the primary way to control the world market in order to suit the needs of Empire.⁵⁶

The final method of control is referred to by the authors as “ether”. Management of communications, educational structuring, and cultural regulation would appear to be sovereign prerogatives. Under Empire, this is not the case. Sovereignty is subordinate to communication. This is due to the deterritorializing effect of communication. Communication is incompatible with a limited space, it seeks a global circulation.⁵⁷ Here, communication becomes completely deterritorialized and dissolves all sovereign relationships. Education and culture cannot help but follow. Communication is unique in that it is the one form of production in which capital has made society completely give in to its regime. All alternative paths to Empire have been suppressed.⁵⁸

It would seem that all of these mechanisms rest in the control of the United States given its prominent position in all three areas. This is not the case. Any territorial view of Empire is invalidated by its flexible and mobile nature. Financial and military power can be given territorial restrictions, but it is impossible to do so with communication. Communication has become the central factor in the relations of production. Since communication is not bound by territory, it follows that no single nation can hold the reins of power.⁵⁹

The theory of Empire has already come under attack by other scholars. The actions of the United States in Iraq have presented an empirical challenge to Empire. In particular, the authors of *Empire* seem to have overstated the importance of international law and organizations such as the United Nations.⁶⁰ The American invasion of Iraq circumvented international law and was not a police action called upon by the system. In other words, the U.S. acted unilaterally in its invasion of Iraq.⁶¹ This violates the claim that Empire is a global concert under one director.

In *Empire*, the UN General Assembly has a lot of power. History has shown that this is not always the case. The General Assembly can be circumvented if it is in the interest of the dominant state and its allies. Examples of this include the aforementioned invasion of Iraq and the war in Kosovo, which also circumvented the General Assembly and Security Council.⁶² Hardt and Negri state that "All interventions of the imperial armies are solicited by one or more of the parties involved in an already existing conflict."⁶³ This cannot be the case when wars such as the one in Iraq seem to be actions that have been taken unilaterally.

The ideas of deterritorialization and decentralization have also come under fire due to the invasion of Iraq. It is argued that the invasion of Iraq is the classic case of the imperialist state conquering and plundering a weaker state.⁶⁴ Essentially, this is the same thing done by the Roman and British Empires. The U.S. has not given up its interests to a global Empire. Instead, critics of Empire argue that it is merely the newest example of an imperialist state.⁶⁵

A theoretical conception of Empire seems to ignore the importance of access to strategic resources such as oil. These resources help to prop up production and the civilization of capitalism. It can be argued that the war in Iraq refutes this conception. Oil is one of the central elements of the global system of capitalism, and Iraq has the second-largest amount of oil reserves in the world.⁶⁶ The view held by many today is that the war in Iraq was a move to secure oil for America. Assuming that the conception of Empire is the current state of international affairs, then it would follow that a war to secure oil is unnecessary. This is due to the fact that all actors are part of the same system. If the war in Iraq is indeed about oil, then this is a major refutation of Empire.⁶⁷

Under *Empire*, the idea of the national economy is disappearing, and transnational corporations are becoming more global and less national. Critics argue that this is not true. The ownership of a corporation is always going to have a physical base within a state. While corporations are able to escape some laws through loopholes such as “tax haven” countries, they are obligated to follow some sort of national legal framework.⁶⁸ If corporations were truly global, then it does not follow that American corporations have been the primary beneficiaries of the conflict in Iraq. In truth, American companies such as Halliburton have profited from the war. This does not follow the logic put forth in *Empire*.⁶⁹

It is important to note that these events had not happened at the time that *Empire* was written. The preface to the book states that it was started after the end of the first Gulf War and finished before the beginning of the conflict in Kosovo.⁷⁰ The authors could not possibly have foreseen events such as September 11 and another war in Iraq. Despite this, these criticisms still pose quite a threat to the theory of *Empire*.

These theories are the most prominent conceptions of postmodern imperialism. How does the European Union fit into all of this? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to understand what the EU actually is and how it has been conceptualized throughout its history.

The European Union

History

The EU began as the European Coal and Steel Community, or ECSC, in 1951. The six founding nations of the ECSC wanted to unite their heavy industries under unified management. This was done for security reasons, as Europe was still rebuilding from

World War II. In 1957, the six nations of the ECSC expanded their cooperation. Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands signed the Treaties of Rome. These treaties brought the European Economic Community into being along with Euratom, which regulated nuclear energy. On July 1, 1967, the EEC, ECSC, and Euratom were merged into one community. During the next two decades, six other nations joined the European Community.⁷¹

The next major part of European integration was the Single European Act (SEA) of 1986. The SEA restarted the desire for further integration among the members of the European Community. It created a deadline for the creation of the internal market in addition to committing members to creating convergent monetary and economic policy.⁷² These two items led to two conferences between members on monetary and political union.⁷³

These conferences led to the Maastricht Treaty, which made the European Union official on February 7, 1992. This treaty put rules into place in several different policy areas. A single currency was agreed upon as well as closer cooperation in economic policy, foreign and security policy along with justice and home affairs. These are known as the three “pillars” of the EU. On January 1, 1993, the European single internal market was established, which facilitated the free movement of goods, people, money, and services across borders. The EU then expanded to 15 members in 1995.⁷⁴

In 1997, the Treaty of Amsterdam was signed. This treaty built upon the Maastricht Treaty and reformed several European institutions. Later in the same year, the enlargement process expanded to the countries of the former Soviet Union along with Malta and Cyprus. In 1999, the European single currency, or the Euro, was

introduced in 11 countries. Coins and notes followed in 2002. Ten more nations joined the EU in 2005, with Bulgaria and Romania following in 2007. This brought the EU to its current total of 27 members.⁷⁵ In 2009, the Treaty of Lisbon came into effect, which reshaped the three main pillars of the EU into a single entity.⁷⁶

This is a very simplified history of the EU. However, it illustrates the evolution of the EU from a regional economic organization to an organization that influences all of Europe. Throughout this evolution, several theories have been advanced to explain the process of European integration. These theories have changed to match the progress of the EU.

Conceptions of the EU

The first of these theories is the theory of neo-functionalism. Neo-functionalism has its roots in the 1950s as a method of explaining how the ECSC came together. It was meant to explain international relations with processes of regional integration. Soon, neo-functionalism became more associated with the experience of the EC rather than international relations.⁷⁷ The theory has three main characteristics: Spillover, elite socialization, and supranational interest groups.

The first of these is the concept of spillover. Spillover is a concept that states that cooperation on a specific issue will extend to other issues as well. Spillover comes in three varieties. Functional spillover refers to situations in which one movement towards cooperation leads to another. This can be seen in the creation of the European Single Market. In order for the single market to work, states had to remove some of their own trade barriers. Political spillover occurs during deliberated political processes in which elites state that supranational solutions are needed to resolve a specific issue.

Finally, cultivated spillover occurs when supranational actors are able to move political integration forward with mediation between members. This can occur through “package deals” that put multiple issues together as one item. This allows the actors involved to protect their interests.⁷⁸

Elite socialization refers to the loyalties developed by those participating in the processes of decision-making. These loyalties are often not to any member, but to the supranational organization itself. Under neo-functionalism, groups of policy makers become loyal to the institution and attempt to persuade national elites about the benefits to supranational cooperation.⁷⁹

Elite socialization is very closely related to the third and final characteristic of neo-functionalism, which is the development of interest groups that are supranational in orientation. These interest groups influence the policies of the institution. Neo-functionalists believe that they would also exert pressure on member governments to become more integrated within the institution.⁸⁰ Here, interest groups act in much the same way as the political elites of the institution.

Neo-functionalism has been attacked on empirical and theoretical grounds. Empirically, neo-functionalism fails to explain the lack of Western European political integration during a period ranging from the 1970s to the early 1980s. This setback was brought on by a French boycott of European institutions in the mid 1960s, during which the process of integration had suffered setbacks that ran contrary to the neo-functionalist thesis.⁸¹

The theoretical criticism of neo-functionalism involves challenges to the idea of elite socialization. Critics of neo-functionalism argue that the interests of member states

would be served by having loyal civil servants within EEC institutions. Rather than become loyal to a supranational cause, these civil servants would represent the interests of the member states. These civil servants would also represent their national interests when major political issues became part of the agenda.⁸²

Another theory used to conceptualize the EU is intergovernmentalism. This approach is centered on the actions of the member states. The interests of the members fuel the integration process. Integration is seen as a zero-sum game where the “winner” takes the spoils. Intergovernmentalism is based on the realist and neo-realist theories of international relations.⁸³ Realist theory says that states exist in an environment that does not contain an authority that ensures order. In other words, the international system is anarchical. Neo-realism builds on this theory by stating that some order is possible by way of international cooperation. Organizations such as the EU are able to lower the amount of anarchy in the system. Under these conditions, cooperation comes through the ability to find common solutions for common problems.⁸⁴

The concept of sovereignty is crucial to the theory of intergovernmentalism. A good definition of sovereignty is “the right to hold and exercise authority.” This right is retained by the member state. In this theory, the member states are able to be involved in the integration process without losing sovereignty.⁸⁵ Instead, sovereignty can be pooled or delegated. This means that the supranational nature of the EU is ultimately subservient to the member states. The organization cannot work without the willingness to share or delegate sovereignty. As a further recourse, member states can choose to drop out of the organization.⁸⁶

Intergovernmentalism was expanded on in the 1970's. This expansion introduced the ideas of "high" politics and "low" politics. The sphere of high politics has to do with issues of sovereignty and national identity. The sphere of low politics deals with economics and is more technocratic in nature.⁸⁷ Intergovernmentalists suggested that while significant integration was possible in low politics, the sphere of high politics remained impermeable.⁸⁸

Intergovernmentalism stems from critiques of neo-functionalism. Naturally, intergovernmentalism also has its detractors. Some scholars have rejected the distinction between high and low politics. The history of the EU gives some weight to these claims. The creation of the Euro and of a common foreign and security policy have caused proponents of intergovernmentalism to soften their stance on high and low politics by conceding that the distinction between the two is only useful to a point.⁸⁹

Decision-making processes

These two approaches have dominated the conceptualization of the EU for most of its existence. Both of these are rationalist approaches that see interests as "materially given." They are also committed to the use of the scientific method and realities that can be observed.⁹⁰ Today, other theories have emerged that provide new ways to look at the institution. One relatively new conception is a constructivist look at the EU. Constructivism provides a look at international relations that does not have its origins in realism or idealism. It sees interests as socially constructed and is focused on the emergence of collective understanding within an institution.⁹¹

Constructivist study focuses on social institutions, the construction of identities, and norms. This is done in order to determine how they shape social interaction. They

are also interested in how organizations serve as forums for communication, persuasion, deliberation, and socialization. In the case of the EU, these factors create European identities. Ideas and norms are communicated between actors, and identities are established. European norms and ideas make their way into the member states of the organization.⁹²

Enlargement

As an organization, the EU is not exclusively focused on policies within its member states. The EU also has policies that influence the actions of non-member states. The most obvious way that the EU influences others is through its enlargement policy. EU membership comes with many advantages, chief among those being open access to European markets. Membership also comes with access to structural funds, agricultural subsidies, and increased foreign direct investment.⁹³

In order for states to accede to the EU, they must meet a series of requirements. Any aspiring member must be a stable democracy with a market economy that is not under state control. This means that any state that enters the EU will be similar in nature to the rest of the members.⁹⁴ The motive for the EU to bring in new members is the wish to spread liberal democracy and market economies throughout Europe.⁹⁵

This wish has been demonstrated through the accession process for the former Soviet states. After the fall of the Soviet Union, members of the EU were wary of accepting former communist states. In response to this, a new set of membership conditions were formed.⁹⁶ These conditions are referred to as the Copenhagen Criteria, and they were first imposed on the nations that acceded to the EU in the 2004-07 round of enlargement. In addition to having a functioning democracy and market economy,

the current members must see the candidate as being able to handle “the obligations of membership.”⁹⁷ Before, potential members only needed to “respect the principles of liberty and democracy” and do the same for “human rights and fundamental freedoms.”⁹⁸

These conditions are open to interpretation by the member states. This makes accession a “moving target” for candidates. The power of interpretation gives the EU a huge advantage in accession negotiations as it lets the Union act as both a referee and a player in the process. The EU has never given a concrete definition of the conditions required for accession. There are only annual reports published by the European Commission on the readiness of each candidate.⁹⁹ This is an example of how the EU is able to determine who exactly will join their ranks.

With enlargement, linkages appear to conceptualizations of the EU. Rationalism can be seen in the interests of the actors in the enlargement process. In order for enlargement to take place, the current members must see a benefit for themselves. This can lead to members attempting to minimize the gains of candidates if they feel that those gains would come at their expense. An example of this can be seen in restrictions placed on the movement of workers from candidates. These restrictions came out of fears that workers would emigrate to more developed members in search of jobs. The gain for the new members would come at the expense of the current members, which explains why action was taken.¹⁰⁰

Additionally, members can stall the process to hold out for individual gains due to the fact that enlargement requires a unanimous vote. This can be seen in the Cohesion Fund that was brought into existence by the Maastricht Treaty. This fund helped poorer

nations such as Greece, Italy, and Ireland with regional development issues. In exchange, these nations supported the accession of Austria, Finland, and Sweden in 1995.¹⁰¹

The constructivist view looks at the movement of European values and norms to the candidate nations. Here, candidates will move towards becoming part of an organization if they have common aims and values. For the current members, this is a continuation of their policy of spreading democracy and market economies.¹⁰²

Constructivism helps to explain the enlargement process in Iceland and Turkey. The prospect of Iceland joining the EU has been met with an enthusiastic response due to the fact that Iceland has a similar background to the other member states. On the other hand, Turkey has a different identity and set of values. This might help explain why the Turkish accession process has been slow.¹⁰³

The enlargement process can also be linked to the forms of postmodern imperialism discussed earlier. As previously mentioned, the Copenhagen Criteria require that candidates be democratic and have market economies. A likely interpretation for this is that the members of the EU wish to export this type of state. In doing so, the members further their own interests. This explanation combines both constructivist and rational views.

By requiring that potential members have capitalist economies, the EU links itself with capitalist imperialism. When these candidates join the EU, they gain access to European markets, and the members of the EU gain access to their market. This creates new foreign markets for EU members. With these new markets, the current members are able to profit from enlargement.

The EU is able to create incentives other than enlargement for economic transformation in former communist nations. The EU acts as an aid donor for these nations, much like the IMF. It also imposes conditions on these nations that serve as ways to aid their transformation from communism. These conditions may not be beneficial for these nations. EU economic policies were designed by nations at a more advanced stage of development. They might not be appropriate for nations that are in a transitional phase.¹⁰⁴ It is possible to argue that the EU is attempting to shoehorn these nations into a capitalist framework that they might not be ready for. The rationale for this is that the members of the EU will be able to expand the markets for their goods.

This is a relatively new development in the EU enlargement process. During other periods of enlargement, new members have been able to get concessions. An example of this is the UK securing changes that helped the EFTA and the Commonwealth before it became a member in 1973. This reciprocal nature of accession is not seen today. In fact, the EU has taken a more clientelistic view towards states from the former Soviet Union.¹⁰⁵ The concept of clientelism involves an asymmetric yet mutually beneficial relationship between patrons and clients. In this case, former Soviet states are patrons that are not on an equal footing with the EU, but they benefit from the relationship due to the advantages of membership.¹⁰⁶

In the latest round of enlargement, the EU set yearly priorities for the candidates through the Accession Partnerships. Along with the Copenhagen Criteria, this has the effect of lowering the amount of room candidates have to compromise with the EU. Accession is now a package deal that is very hard for countries to take apart. This is

because nations do not have much power to resist the wishes of the EU, as the EU now has an agenda that comes with conditional aid and sanctions.¹⁰⁷

The tool of enlargement is a very effective one for the EU. Even with a more restrictive policy for which nations can come into the EU, the EU went through its largest ever enlargement during the 2000s. One possible explanation is that the EU acts as a hegemon within Europe. The EU has the motivation to provide economic stability, as this will benefit all of its member nations. The EU also has the power to do this through the requirements countries must adhere to in order to become a member. Here, there is a powerful incentive for a nation to join the EU. If the organization can promote economic stability and growth, it is very attractive for potential members. This is one of the reasons that many former communist states have joined the EU. Most of these states have poor economies, and access to the EU is a way to improve them.

The organization also has the ability to enforce the rules of the system as is required of a hegemon. It can withhold funding if it believes that funds are being misused or if states are not following the rules set upon them. In 2008, €500 million were withheld from the Bulgarian government due to “poor use of funds.” The EU promised to give the money to Bulgaria if corrective action was taken.¹⁰⁸

Another example of enforcement is the yearly report delivered by the European Commission on the status of states bidding to become members. The Commission can recommend candidate status for a state based on the reforms undertaken. It can also recommend that membership talks be opened with a state. The 2011 report says that membership talks should be opened with Montenegro due to their reform efforts. The report also criticizes Bosnia and Herzegovina for not having a functional government

and for not dealing with ethnic discrimination. As a result, the state is no closer to candidate status.¹⁰⁹

With the Euro, the EU fulfills another role of a hegemon, which is the maintenance of an international monetary system. An example of this maintenance can be seen in the handling of the financial crisis in Greece. The EU has assumed the role of the hegemon in providing liquidity. The Greeks have received two bailout packages worth roughly 110 billion Euros each. Leaders of the EU then created the European Financial Stability Fund, which is a general rescue fund containing 440 billion Euros.¹¹⁰ Another example of maintenance is the existence of the European Central Bank, which strives for monetary stability and the management of inflation.¹¹¹

Theories of capitalist imperialism also figure into the actions of the EU. The current crisis in Greece illustrates what can possibly happen to countries that do not carry out EU austerity plans. The EU closely looks over Greece every quarter before giving out the next batch of bailout money. Today, Greece looks very close to an economic collapse that would have disastrous consequences. Much of the population wishes to go against EU treaties and leave the eurozone. In this case, the Greeks would convert back to their old currency, the drachma. This would cause many depositors to pull their savings out of Greek banks in an effort to keep their money from being converted into drachma. Greek businesses would also be rendered bankrupt due to their euro debts. Ultimately, Greek membership in the EU would also be in doubt. This incident shows the ability of the EU to make sure that members follow their economic policies. If they do not adhere to the wishes of the organization, they might find themselves on the outside looking in.¹¹²

While enlargement is an effective foreign policy tool for the EU, it does not have a very wide reach. Obviously, the EU is a European organization. This means that enlargement policies have no effect on other continents where the EU might want to have influence. However, the EU is able to influence these nations through their Neighborhood Policy.

European Neighborhood Policy

The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was created in 2004 as a way to manage the relationships between the EU and the non-member states that border it. The ENP has taken the form of a bilateral policy between the EU and 16 of these nations. Through the ENP, the EU is able to improve its relations with these nations. It does so by promoting common values such as rule of law, democracy, and market economies. The ENP works through bilateral agreements that are referred to as Action Plans. The Action Plans give a course of reforms that are designed to be completed within three to five years.¹¹³

Reaching out to these nations was not a top priority on the EU agenda prior to the latest round of enlargement. The enlargement into the former Soviet Union created a desire to ensure the stability of the surrounding regions. This action was necessary to prevent instability from spilling into nations that had recently joined the EU. The European Commission acknowledged that economic growth in EU nations might cause greater differences in living standards. The Commission stated the need to handle issues such as public health, organized crime, and border management in their new members. Finally, the members of the EU wished to delay further enlargement.¹¹⁴

The ENP represents the latest attempt of the EU to devise a strategy for its neighbors that did not involve them becoming members. In 1989, the European Economic Area (EEA) was created in order to postpone the membership of states in the European Free Trade Area (EFTA). The EEA brought the Single European Market to these nations, but they could not participate in the process of making law. Some members of EFTA were not happy with this, and they joined the EU in 1995.¹¹⁵

In 1991, Commissioner Frans Andriessen proposed the idea of a category for affiliate members. Affiliates would be able to participate in certain policy areas which included foreign and monetary policy. This idea was rejected by both the European Community and by the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. The next iteration of this idea was a proposed "European Political Area" in 1992. This allowed leaders of Central and Eastern European states to be in meetings on European issues.¹¹⁶

The next step in this evolution came in 1993. "Structured relationships" were proposed, which would serve as frameworks for negotiations of EU issues with these countries. This is a very similar idea to the Action Plans that the EU has with its neighbors today. In this case, the problem was that these nations had been given the green light to apply for EU membership. Frustration with structured relationships mounted, and the idea quickly failed.¹¹⁷

With the ENP, the EU is looking to influence other states into becoming good neighbors. The EU definition of a good neighbor is one that conforms to the values of the EU and to certain social and economic laws. In this case, the EU is continuing to promote free market democracies without actually bringing them into the organization.

This process is expected to create gains in prosperity throughout the neighborhood in the same way that the enlargement process does.¹¹⁸

As previously stated, these reforms are brought about through the use of bilateral Action Plans. These plans give each nation policy goals to work toward. The EU gives financial aid in order to support reforms in these nations.¹¹⁹ However, there are various flaws with the Action Plans. The sheer number of items that a participating nation needs to take care of is staggering. The Action Plan for Ukraine has 300 “priorities for action.” In addition, the gains from ENP participation are presented in vague terms, and they are not well connected to completed reforms. If benefits are not tied to reform, then it is difficult to argue that the ENP creates an incentive for reform.¹²⁰

Another problem lies with the initial progress of ENP nations on the issues raised by the EU. In comparison with the states that joined in the last round of enlargement, ENP nations such as Belarus and Syria have much lower levels of human rights, democracy, and law. In addition, the EU has made previous attempts to champion these items in the ENP nations. These efforts have been unsuccessful. These facts raise questions about how effective ENP reforms will be.¹²¹

The overall effort of the EU in democracy promotion can be described as uncoordinated and unfocused.¹²² While the EU has occasionally placed political clauses into agreements with other countries, it has not consistently enforced them. Sanctions and aid restrictions have been uncommon when other nations have behaved in an undemocratic manner. Prior to the ENP, aid allocations have not correlated strongly with democratic progress. Some scholars have argued that the EU has only pushed its

democratic agenda when it has been convenient. These factors could lead to ENP states not taking the agreement seriously and pocketing the aid money.¹²³

The problem of credibility is especially true with the states near the Mediterranean. Here, there has been a lot of economic cooperation with states that do not have good human rights records.¹²⁴ This has led some Arab states to bring the EU commitment to reform into question. Part of this is due to the difficulty of getting all members of the EU to agree on policy. Individual members may have their own foreign policies, and there is difficulty aligning national and EU interests. Finally, the EU has not used strict conditionality in the region due to the destabilizing prospects. While this region is anything but stable today, this episode shows that the EU often values short-term stability over long-term democracy.¹²⁵

Another big problem with the ENP is that it creates a divide between states in the EU and those that are just in the neighborhood. Several nations rejected the EEA and chose to join the EU. With the ENP, the same thing could happen in the case of Ukraine. Ukraine has wanted to join the EU since the middle of the 1990s. This is despite the fact that the country does not possess the values needed for membership. The ENP can be seen as a way to manage this problem, but it has not done a good job with Ukraine. In this case, simply being a part of the European neighborhood is not a strong enough incentive for reform. For nations such as Ukraine, full membership might be required in order for the EU to succeed in spreading norms and values.¹²⁶

Romano Prodi said in 2002: "The goal of accession is certainly the most powerful stimulus of reform we can think of. But why should a less ambitious goal not have some effect? A substantive and workable concept of proximity would have a

positive effect.”¹²⁷ This shows why the ENP is very similar to enlargement. Both enlargement and the ENP are based around the spread of common values and norms. They also offer economic benefits to the candidates or neighbors. The ENP shares many linkages to conceptions of the EU with enlargement. As a rational actor, the EU benefits from reaching out to these countries. With the EU reaching into the former Soviet Union, security has become an issue. The Action Plans contain items concerning cooperation against terrorism and non-proliferation.¹²⁸ Some of the new neighbors of the EU are unstable, and it can be seen that the EU wishes to protect itself from this instability.

The EU also has concerns about the border security of their new neighbors. Measures that have been proposed include visa facilitation and the establishment of border traffic regimes. These proposals have been unsuccessful. The ENP contains items about border security, but it is possible that more border controls will simply create more illegal activity.¹²⁹ Despite this, if the EU can accomplish its goal of border controls in these nations, it helps the security of its member states.

The ENP and enlargement both have a similar role in the views of constructivists. Both are geared toward the establishment of common norms and values. However, it can be argued that the ENP is more ambitious due to the nations that it deals with. Many former Soviet bloc states such as Poland were already in the process of putting democratic governments and market economies into place before the release of the Copenhagen Criteria. In this case, the EU seems to be attempting to export their values to undemocratic regimes that have not been enticed by the possible benefits.¹³⁰

So far, authoritarian nations such as Belarus have resisted the ENP. This has caused relations between the EU and Belarus to become strained. In a speech made on December 7, 2011, European Commissioner for Enlargement Stefan Fule delivered his vision for the future of Belarus. In his speech, Fule said that the EU would not engage in bilateral talks with Belarus until “basic rights and freedoms” are restored. Fule also made note of the sanctions such as a visa ban and asset freeze placed on the state. In order to move the state towards reform, the EU has also increased its assistance to civil society groups within Belarus to €19.3 million between 2011 and 2013.¹³¹

The ENP and enlargement also share many of the same linkages with postmodern imperialism. Both establish the EU as a hegemon within the region, and both impose conditionality agreements on other nations as a means to encourage reform. Despite its earlier history with some of these states, the EU has been committed to enforcing these agreements. Bilateral talks are halted with uncooperative states such as Belarus, and these states are also subject to sanctions. States that make progress on reforms are rewarded with additional aid. In 2010, the EU deployed an advisory team to Moldova in order to aid it with further reform. This came following an agreement between Moldova and the EU in 2009.¹³² Characteristics of capitalist imperialism can be seen here as well. The EU allocates funds to these nations, and it wishes to see adjustments toward democracy and a market economy in return. In most cases, states have made progress towards these goals.

In addition to enlargement and the ENP, the EU has another method of interaction with other nations. This takes the form of a developmental assistance policy

with former colonies of EU members. This policy started in 1963 with the First Yaounde Agreement. The agreement established “reciprocal preferential trade access” between members of the European Economic Community and their former colonies. This was replaced by the Lome Convention in 1974. This made the partnership between members and colonies institutional in nature. A group of African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries were given a voice in Brussels that would allow them to maintain a partnership with Europe.¹³³

This system was replaced by the Cotonou Agreement in 2000. The Cotonou Agreement was created due to the emergence of the global economy. In response to this, the system features an emphasis on plans negotiated between ACP countries and the EU. The Cotonou system also acts very similar to enlargement and the ENP in the sense that EU aid is conditional to the recipient instituting democratic and free-market institutions. Under this system, the EU interacts with 78 ACP countries.¹³⁴ This makes the Cotonou Agreement one of the farthest-reaching policy tools of the EU.

CONCLUSION

The EU has been described as a “silent empire.” It is not interested in overt displays of its power, or in forcibly subjugating other peoples. Instead, other nations line up in order to become a part of it. The so-called silent empire is also voluntary in nature, having been described as “a commonwealth of consent.”¹³⁵

The EU is not an imperialist actor in the classical sense, but it does have some characteristics of postmodern imperialism. It acts as a hegemon within Europe. It attempts to provide international economic stability through its policies. It also promotes the liberalization of trade through the Copenhagen Criteria and European Single Market.

Finally, it maintains an international monetary system with the Euro unit of currency.

The EU also acts as a hegemon by attempting to bring security to the region. It can work to liberalize trade without jeopardizing this objective. Security is brought through the spread of common norms and values through the region. If the EU is able to export its norms and values to its neighbors, it is able to create more stability. This stability makes the institution more secure, and increases the security of its member states.

Characteristics of capitalist imperialism also show up within the EU.

Enlargement, the ENP, and the Cotonou Agreement impose economic conditions on other nations. These nations are often much less developed than the members of the EU. By promoting trade liberalization, the EU is able to open these markets for their members, which can increase the profits of firms located within the EU. The EU has also involved the IMF and World Bank in the enlargement process and the ENP. The European Commission makes sure that these institutions see the reports. This is done in order to boost the leverage that the EU has.¹³⁶ The IMF and World Bank have the power to block aid money if their prescribed reforms are not being implemented, and a negative report from the EU could cause them to take this action. While the EU is not directly withholding funds in this situation, it communicates with institutions that can.

Finally, the EU does show some qualities of Empire, although this theory does not seem to match much of EU policy. The EU is not governed by a single conductor, as it is an organization with 27 different members that each have their own interests. However, the EU is dedicated to peace, and attempts to spread it throughout the system. This is done through the exporting of democracy and market economies. A possible explanation for this is liberal peace theory, which states that democracies do

not often go to war against each other.¹³⁷ If this is true, then the export of democracy brings security.

The EU does not fall neatly into any of these three characterizations of postmodern imperialism. It seems to be more of a hybrid of the categories. EU policies that could be construed as imperialist tend to contain behaviors of more than one type of postmodern imperialism. The EU does not engage in overt imperial behavior, but instead chooses to be more subtle in its influence. Rather than conquer states, the EU seeks to shape their policies into something that resembles the members of the EU.

This is an example of what political scientists call “soft power.” This term was first used by Joseph S. Nye Jr. in 1990. Nye noted that a state might get the outcomes it wants due to the fact that other states want to emulate it. The state that is being emulated must set an agenda and a structure that convinces other states to change their policies.¹³⁸ If this state can make its authority seem legitimate, it will deal with less resistance in the international arena. The state must also create a culture and ideology that is able to attract other states. If a state can perform these actions, it might not have to use “hard power.”¹³⁹ Hard power is the act of ordering another state to carry out some sort of action.¹⁴⁰ This is often done by force. A current example of a state that uses hard power is the United States. During the 2000s, the U.S. has resorted to the use of force in Afghanistan and Iraq in order to get the changes it wants.

The description of soft power is a very close match to the international behaviors of the EU. It also matches constructivist views on international relations. The EU wishes to spread common norms and values throughout its sphere of influence. It is a legitimate organization within this sphere, and it has the policy tools to generate

outcomes that it finds positive. Enlargement, the ENP, and the Cotonou Agreement are all powerful tools that the EU uses to spread norms and values. Rather than impose conditions by military force like America has done in Iraq and Afghanistan, the EU convinces other nations to “want what it wants.”¹⁴¹ It is through these methods that the EU is able to exhibit imperialist tendencies. In conclusion, the EU is an organization that attempts to change the policies of states around it in order to make them resemble its members. It is able to do this through the application of soft power. In doing so, it exhibits characteristics of postmodern imperialism.

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